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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE IN THE SOVIET  
ARMED FORCES: A PARADOX  
FOR THE NEW SOVIET MAN

by

Robert Nelson Smith

March 1985

Thesis Advisor:

Robert Bathurst

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The examination of discipline in the Soviet armed forces also reveals a second paradox. This paradox arises due to the Soviet Marxist-Leninist insistence for quantification to provide scientific solutions, while discipline is recognized as an unquantifiable morale factor of war. An examination of current disciplinary problems in the Soviet armed forces highlights this point.

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The Concept of Discipline in the Soviet Armed Forces:  
A Paradox for the New Soviet Man

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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from the

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March 1985

## ABSTRACT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an examination of the concept of discipline in the Soviet armed forces. The Soviets view discipline as a requirement for attaining order and control. Soviet authorities argue that strict military discipline is the most vital condition contributing to high combat capability and constant combat readiness. [Ref. 1: p. 289]

Soviet military discipline is a combination of several permutations. Whether considered as battlefield discipline, barracks discipline or discipline imposed through punishment, the different components of discipline merge to form an overall concept of military discipline that is examined in this study. (The concepts of labor discipline and party discipline are not examined in this study. Only military discipline will be examined as it directly influences combat capability.) Yet discipline is not reflected in quantitative measures of military power such as orders of battle and tables of organization and equipment commonly used to assess military power, as during Congressional budget hearings. Therefore it is important to discuss discipline which is an often overlooked item when estimating military capabilities.

There is an apparent paradox that exists in the Soviet method of attaining this disciplined force. Soviet writers, like the late Marshal Grechko, recognize that discipline may be achieved by methods of punishment, or with a system of awards and incentives, and by enhanced patriotic zeal to boost morale and thereby instill a will to fight [Ref. 2: pp. 169-173]. Yet the historical record seems to indicate a cultural reliance on methods of physical punishment to impose discipline.

This thesis will briefly examine the concept and application of discipline in the Soviet armed forces through its historical progression. Historical analysis helps to identify peculiar Russian characteristics that exist today, such as the reliance on physical punishments to impose discipline. Further, each culture provides its own forms and contents, hence the development of military discipline in the Soviet Union is different from the West. Discipline concepts, practices and habits therefore become historical and cultural trends unique to the development of Russian and Soviet military forces.

The reliance on punishment as a method of achieving discipline and control appears to manifest itself repeatedly in Russian and Soviet history to incorporate new weapons and strategies. For example, Peter the Great had to impose previously absent standards of discipline on his forces to

assimilate linear tactics and muskets. Nicholas I imposed strict discipline and control to secure his throne. Lenin and Stalin both demanded discipline in the armed forces to safeguard the regime and to effectively use the implements of modern war like the tank and the airplane [Ref. 3: pp. 220-222]. Marshal Sokolovsky stated that strict discipline is a necessary requirement for warfare in the nuclear missile age [Ref. 4: p. 378]. Yet in each instance, punishment seems to be the primary method of attaining the requisite discipline.

There is a second apparent paradox that arises in examining the concept of discipline in the Soviet armed forces. Discipline as a factor of modern war was identified by the eminent military theorist Carl von Clausewitz as a "principle morale element." Clausewitz significantly influenced Lenin and subsequent Soviet writers through his fundamental exposition on the conduct of war [Ref. 5: pp. 322-323]. In his classical treatise On War, Clausewitz wrote of the morale elements, including discipline, and stressed that while the morale elements are of supreme significance, they are all non-quantifiable [Ref. 6: pp. 182-192].

The apparent paradox arises since the Soviets have adopted a particular political philosophy, Marxism-Leninism, that emphasizes the use of scientific analysis for the

solution of human as well as engineering problems. The scientific method, though, requires the quantification of discipline in order to develop a solution. The effect of this philosophy is examined in this study through its dialectic reasoning process and its requirements for a scientific solution for the Soviet discipline problem in contrast with Clausewitz's dictum. The apparent results of the application of this philosophy to the problems of contemporary war and military discipline has been the development of the concept of the "new Soviet man" and the reliance on the science of cybernetics. These results will be discussed for their impact on the Soviet military discipline problem.

This study includes a discussion of current disciplinary infractions in the Soviet armed forces to illustrate the apparent paradox raised by the requirement for quantification. Problems associated with disciplinary infractions such as alcoholism, ethnic unrest and overcrowding do not seem readily convertible to numerical equivalents for inclusion in mathematical expressions.



## II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE

The Soviets claim that their state is the result of the evolutionary process of historical progression. Therefore it is reasonable to examine the concept of military discipline as an element of that progression. It is useful to study the development and application of discipline through Russian history because each culture has its own forms and contents. Hence, the Russian and Soviet concept of military discipline has evolved and developed in a different manner than in the West.

Historical analysis provides a foundation for understanding because events do not occur in isolation, but are part of a context. Therefore, it is useful to begin this study before the establishment of the modern Soviet state or the Bolshevik Revolution. Modern Soviet leaders like Grechko and Gorshkov proudly refer to specific events of pre-Revolutionary Russia to provide legitimacy and heritage for the current regime. Events such as Peter's victory at Poltava, the defeat of Napoleon, and the naval success in the Battle of Sinop are used in an effort to promote good order and discipline.

However, a review of the historical record reveals a seemingly consistent pattern for Russian and Soviet leaders

to rely on what by Western democratic standards are brutal, physical punishments to achieve a disciplined, controllable force. A paradox arises when this pattern of brutal, physical punishments is contrasted first with Peter's development of a system of military regulations ostensibly promulgated to protect the individual soldier and sailor from abuses. [Ref. 7: pp. 384-387]

The modern concept of military discipline in the Soviet Union can properly be said to begin with the reign of Peter I (the Great). It was during his reign that Russia came to be recognized as a great power in the world, and to accomplish that feat Peter had to impose standards of military discipline that were previously not present.

Discipline in the reign of Peter I (1698-1725) was imposed on the military by imperial diktat. Strict discipline was required in order to incorporate the advances in the art of war, like linear formations and musketry, to successfully compete against other European powers. Yet the requisite discipline was imposed with physical punishments. Discipline at times seems to be a goal unto itself. This is evidenced by the development and use of the knout, a Russian refinement of the cat-o-nine-tails for whippings and beatings that often resulted in death for actual and perceived offenses. Yet at the time it was believed that only through harsh, iron-bound discipline and rigid physical

and mental controls could the serfs be molded into an effective fighting force. [Ref. 8: pp. 211-212].

Discipline continued to be imposed by physical punishments when the Preobrazhensky Guards were empowered to combat two persistent evils--alcoholism and slovenliness. Yet these scourges were punished with the knout and the lash rather than by some method of education and incentives [Ref. 9: p. 51]. Furthermore, a sailor could be suspended by a net beneath the bowsprit for smoking below decks or for failing to salute an officer. A soldier could face permanent exile in Siberia, plus a flogging, for losing his flint. The exact form of punishment was in large measure left to the capricious whim of the officer at the scene [Ref. 10: pp. 22-24]. It appears that the common belief was, as Lincoln puts it, that the Russian serf "could learn only by the stick," and military discipline was so imposed [Ref. 11: p. 179].

That Peter succeeded in using punishment to impose discipline on his forces is evidenced by the victory won at Poltava. Charles XII of Sweden had described the Russian Army as "an undisciplined militia" after he routed the Russian forces at the Battle of Narva on 20 November 1700 [Ref. 12: p. 47]. Charles so described the Russians because they could not effectively engage in modern combat. Yet less than nine years later, after discipline was imposed

with physical punishments, Peter's forces decisively defeated the Swedes at Poltava on 28 June 1709, using the implements and tactics of modern war.

Perhaps the tendency to rely on physical punishment to impose and enforce discipline is a function of Peter's successes in combat. In any case, the punishments stand in contrast to Peter's policies mentioned earlier. However, the paradox of using physical punishments for disciplinary purposes increases when the methods of Alexander Suvorov are considered.

Alexander Suvorov (1730-1800) stands apart in Russian history as an unusual combat commander. Recognizing the necessity of discipline for success in combat, Suvorov relentlessly studied the conduct of warfare to learn its lessons. His essential elements for success were assessment, speed and attack. In his view, though, these were the means to an end, the heart of the system being the individual Russian soldier. Suvorov believed that Christian training would not only exalt the soldier, but that it would also reduce his evil tendencies towards alcoholism, slovenliness and disrespect. [Ref. 11: pp. 253-255]

Suvorov claimed that discipline was the mother of victory. The mandated method of teaching discipline in Suvorov's armies allotted significant time to the study of rules, regulations and instructions so that they might be



fully understood by the common soldier. Suvorov insisted that officers take steps against soldiers who committed infractions by supervision, counsel and exhortation. Furthermore, Suvorov directed that punishments be reserved for the gross offenders. [Ref. 10: pp. 25-30]

Suvorov succeeded in creating a sense of national military pride and a high degree of discipline in the troops under his command. He won resounding victories for Catherine in battles against the Turks, Poles, and Swedes. His most dramatic victories came in the service of Tsar Paul I during the War of the Second Coalition (1798-1800) of Russia, Britain and Austria against Napoleonic France. During 1798, Suvorov led his army into Italy and within a year eliminated Napoleon's previous gains. Nearly always outnumbered, the Russians showed surprising mobility and tactical expertise. The ability to perform such feats is evidence of a highly disciplined force, and that discipline was achieved without the reliance on physical punishments. Due to the failure of Coalition armies in the Netherlands in 1799, Suvorov was forced to fight his way across Switzerland and across southern Germany, but maintained his army as a cohesive fighting unit, a feat that can only be accomplished with a disciplined force. In 1800, Paul, disgusted with the performance of his British and Austrian allies, removed Russia from the coalition and recalled Suvorov. Suvorov

died soon after returning to Russia. His disciplinary methods passed away with him.

Despite the success and discipline achieved by Suvorov, there is a marked return to Petrine habits of physical punishment to impose discipline in the armed forces. The rapid return to brutal, physical punishments is exemplified by the methods of Nicholas I to secure his throne. Nicholas sought to impose strict discipline and control over the armed forces in the aftermath of the stillborn Decembrist Revolt of December 1825.

Many of the participants of the Decembrist Revolt had served as occupation officers in France following the Napoleonic Wars. Most of them were acquainted with ideas of Western liberalism such as liberty, equality, and fraternity, and sought to have them accepted in Russia. Nicholas, rather than incorporating these concepts into his military administration, relied on previously proven methods of physical punishment to impose discipline. This began with the brutal torture and execution of the primary conspirators, of which Nicholas is said to have participated to learn the extent of the revolutionary ferment. [Ref. 9: p. 123].

Nicholas was apparently not satisfied with only executing the major conspirators. The imposition of discipline throughout the entire armed forces proceeded with

tortures, executions, imprisonments, and Siberian exile. Nicholas created a secret police organization in 1826, the Third Section, that was empowered to monitor discipline and impose punishments. The primary methods of the Third Section can be identified as early attempts at organized terror due to the severity and arbitrariness of their punishments. Hence, discipline came to be imposed with exiles being sent to Siberia with only the clothes on their backs while other people suffered the tortures of the rack in Tsarist dungeons. [Ref. 13: pp. 8-10]

The paradox of using physical punishments to impose discipline becomes more pronounced with the success of the Bolshevik revolution. The Bolsheviks came to power with such slogans as "Peace, Bread and Land," and seemed to espouse democratic ideals of humanitarian socialism [Ref. 14: pp. 292-294]. Yet the Bolsheviks were to impose discipline by the intensified use of physical punishments. Such measures included the outright shooting of thousands of tsarist officers for perceived breeches of discipline. In other disciplinary cases, suspect persons were exiled to Siberia or sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment, not only for direct failures of discipline, but also for suspected disloyalty and disaffection with the regime [Ref. 15: pp. 532-535].

Possibly the most vivid example of the brutal imposition of discipline by the new Soviet regime is found when

examining the conduct of the new secret police, the Cheka. The Cheka was given authority to use any means it deemed necessary to impose order and discipline. The result was the use of organized mass terror to impose discipline. Chekists began penetrating the armed forces and suspect persons were summarily tortured, sent to special camps, or executed for disaffection and lapses in discipline. Literally thousands, if not millions, suffered and perished in this fashion. [Ref. 16: pp. 165-168]

The reliance on physical punishments and mass terror to impose discipline would dramatically reappear in 1937-38 when Stalin directed that the purges be instituted against the military. The purges, though they can be said to have served a purpose in imposing discipline and control, stand in stark contrast to the liberal clauses and guarantees of human rights contained in the 1936 constitution [Ref. 3: p. 381]. In essence, Stalin sought to eliminate the military as a potential instrument of political change. Further, Stalin sought to impose his concept of communist military discipline on the armed forces. The execution of thousands of officers, and the imprisonment of thousands more, removed the last of the imperial officers from the military. Yet Medvedev notes a unique difference involved in Stalin's discipline methods. Not only were the officers the victims, but their families were equally punished for



"crimes against the state." The consequence of such brutal actions, whereby millions of people were arbitrarily accused, tortured, imprisoned and shot, was a terror induced discipline [Ref. 17: pp. 210-215]

An interesting example of the Soviet use of physical punishments for disciplinary purposes during the Second World War is the unique Soviet application of the penal battalion. Penal units had existed in imperial times, and prior to the war they had been used for military construction. Though normally working in harsh climates with antiquated implements, terms of service for malcontents were commonly only a few months. During the Second World War, however, soldiers who were considered as disciplinary problems not serious enough to be shot were sentenced to penal units for tens of years. It is highly doubtful that anyone served their full term. These units, instead of being used for rear area construction, became minefield clearers with their bodies. Others were unarmed spotters riding on the outside of tanks. Some were organized into infiltration parties to penetrate German lines and call down artillery fire. Though most were promised amnesty if their task was successfully accomplished, it is difficult to believe that it was ever granted. Furthermore, refusal to follow orders in a penal unit brought instant execution to the soldier and reprisals against his family. [Ref. 18: pp. 213-220]

Post-war discipline was maintained with a familiar tsarist technique of internal exile. This is consistent with the historical record of physical punishment to maintain discipline. Stalin, possibly fearful of a modern Decembrist coup, sent military personnel who had had contact with foreigners during the war to Siberian labor camps to purge their minds of bourgeois contamination. Thus, repatriated prisoners of war, men whose units had linked up with Allied units in Central Europe, and people who were involved with lend-lease transfers suddenly found themselves as prisoners of the government they had just fought for as a preventative disciplinary measure. Also in this group were victims of the purges who had been rehabilitated during the war. They too found themselves, quite often with their families, returned to the frozen wastes of Siberia and Kolyma. [Ref. 17: pp. 460-469]

The predeliction for punishment continues to the present day despite published regulations that characterize corporal and harsh punishments as bourgeois. The regulations state that punishment is to be avoided to the utmost, that discipline is to be attained by education and exhortation [Ref. 19]. Yet this contrasts with the methods of discipline imposed on Petro Grigorenko.

Grigorenko was disciplined with what can be termed the perverted use of modern medical techniques. Grigorenko was

then a major general in the Soviet Army and a decorated combat commander from the Second World War. Diagnosed as insane in 1964 due to recurrent manifestations of anti-Soviet behavior when he insisted that legal guarantees and constitutional rights be enforced, Grigorenko was incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals. He was subjected to drug treatments and physical abuses that rival any Petrine torture chamber. [Ref. 20]

Hence, the historical record seems to reveal a consistent reliance on methods of physical punishment to impose discipline. The record presents a paradox because of the clear example of the success of Suvorov in attaining a disciplined, controllable force with what might be termed enlightened methods instead of punishment to impose discipline. The paradox becomes more pronounced, however, when the examples of punishment are contrasted with imperial reforms, constitutional clauses and published regulations that denigrate the value of punishment as a discipline method. The paradox is not resolvable, but appears to be a historically ingrained condition of the Soviet state and the concept of discipline.

### III. DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS IN THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

The factors discussed below are the ones most frequently reported by a wide variety of books, emigre reports, and the Soviet press, as being factors in disciplinary problems. The discussion is, quite naturally, not all inclusive, but demonstrates items not normally included in military estimates. But to gain an understanding of the concept of discipline in the Soviet armed forces it is necessary to examine some of the factors that appear to be involved in disciplinary infractions.

Furthermore, the identification of factors that seem to result in disciplinary infractions helps to illuminate the apparent paradox created by the Soviet requirement for scientific solutions and quantification. Problems such as alcoholism, ethnic unrest and overcrowding, and their combined effects, do not seem readily convertible into numeric equivalents of any merit.

#### A. ALCOHOL

Alcoholism is a recognized social malady of the Soviet Union and the armed forces are not exempt from the disease. As evidence of the widespread use of alcohol, Kerblay reports that alcohol consumption in the Soviet Union has quadrupled in the last quarter century and accounts for one

third of all consumer food purchases [Ref. 21: p. 290]. Furthermore, Viktor Suvorov identifies alcohol abuse as the primary cause of disciplinary infractions in the Soviet armed forces, resulting not only in drunkenness, but also in theft, bribery, record falsification, and deliberate equipment damage. Alcohol is used not only to deaden the senses and allow a period of escape from the hardships and pressures of daily life, it is also used to celebrate and commemorate every event [Ref. 22: pp. 262-263].

The debilitating effects of alcohol on physical and mental capacities are nearly universally acknowledged, as are the consequent reductions in efficiency and economy, and a breakdown in military discipline. However, the consumption of alcohol reportedly continues to increase, and Soviet personnel demonstrate ingenious techniques for acquiring their craved alcohol.

Soviet soldiers and sailors are supposedly only permitted to drink when expressly allowed in accordance with regulations. In actuality, according to Suvorov, the Soviet soldier drinks when the opportunity to drink presents itself in direct violation of disciplinary restrictions. This includes resorting to drinking eau de cologne or eating shoe polish when vodka is unavailable. [Ref. 23: p. 39]

Emigre reports indicate that many servicemen rely on parcels sent from home to supply their alcohol requirements.



In order to guarantee delivery, postal clerks are often bribed to allow specific packages to pass inspection unopened. To supplement their paltry incomes, servicemen often sell government equipment on the black market which is a deliberate disciplinary infraction. Rubles thus earned can be used either for bribes or for the open purchase of vodka. [Ref. 23: pp. 38-40]

Soviet military personnel frequently find it difficult to smuggle alcohol into their garrisons and posts. This is particularly true in the navy where seamen are inspected and searched as they proceed on and off their ships. However, alcohol is available onboard for cleaning electronic equipment. The alcohol, by several accounts, is never used for its intended purpose. It is consumed by whom ever can get it and the equipment is cleaned with gasoline [Ref. 24: p. 29]. The gasoline leaves a nice shiny gleam, but corrodes the metal and ruins the equipment. Alcohol intended for cleaning purposes is also apparently stolen by troops in the other service branches of the Soviet armed forces, with gasoline or other fluids substituted as a cleaner. The result is a clear breech of discipline as well as a degradation of equipment and people.

The drive for alcohol also leads to falsification of records to account for the missing fluids. Viktor Belenko identified alcohol as a vital component of the MiG-25. Used

as a de-icer, a coolant for electronics, and as a fuel additive, alcohol was necessary in large quantities. The alcohol went into people, not airplanes, and pilots falsified altitude reports and others dumped fuel to account for the use. [Ref. 25: pp. 92-93]

Therefore, alcoholism is a cause and effect of discipline problems. Furthermore, the consequences of such chronic alcoholism are not only equipment degradations but often fatalities. People who drink to escape the brutality of their circumstances, even if only momentarily, are in violation of disciplinary regulations. Through this consumption, inhibitions are lowered and other infractions such as absenteeism, theft and insubordination occur. Alcohol and its widespread effects are serious detriments to the maintenance of discipline in the Soviet armed forces.

#### B. FOOD

Interviews with former soldiers and sailors conducted by Dr. Robert Bathurst reveal that the low quality of food and the quest for more food is a source of a variety of discipline problems, such as graft, theft and insubordination. Food, of course, is a necessary requirement for daily life. It might be expected that Soviet servicemen, serving a regime that attaches great importance to military power, would eat very well. Such is apparently not the case for the majority of the soldiers and sailors.

Typical daily fare, as related by Suvorov and others, consists of a breakfast limited to 150 grams of bread, 10 grams of sugar, a mug of tea and a bowl of kasha (a cereal grain mush). Lunch, served after a morning of rigorous physical training, usually provides the only meat for the day. Heavily salted cod or herring, or sometimes pork fatback, is added to a thin cabbage or potato soup that is the mainstay of the meal. Bread, usually without butter, makes up the balance of the meal. Supper, served late in the day, resembles breakfast with more kasha, more bread, another mug of tea and some sugar. Sometimes a thin soup of potatoes and cabbages is available. [Ref. 22: pp. 226-228]

This menu is repeated day after day. Though it provides adequate calories, the diet is noticeably lacking in essential vitamins and minerals. The absence of fresh fruits and vegetables, along with the lack of animal proteins and dairy products, results in debilitating diseases and infections that reduce combat effectiveness. Open sores and skin ulcers, eye infections, night blindness and tooth decay also lower morale and decrease unit discipline.

Suvorov does stipulate that not everyone in the Soviet military is subjected to this dietary abuse. Pilots, crews of nuclear submarines, members of the Strategic Rocket Forces and Spesnatz troops receive extra meals and ration

supplements. A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, along with eggs and meats, are provided for these personnel because the regime has determined that they are the most important. [Ref. 26: pp. 166-168]

Interviews with former military personnel also report that the food problem, and consequently the discipline problem, is worsened by graft and corruption on the part of kitchen personnel and senior non-commissioned officers. The fact that food is stolen, or used for bribes and favors, is widely recognized and accepted [Ref. 27: p. 10]. Both the quantity and the quality of food provided therefore suffers.

Cockburn reports that the average serviceman does not have the where-with-all to supplement his diet by outside purchases. A meager salary of five rubles cannot buy many candies or cookies, or vegetables, fruits and cheeses, when most monies go toward the purchase of vodka and tobacco. If the general diet is to be supplemented, the Soviet soldier or sailor must rely on food parcels sent from home or resort to theft.

Discipline problems resulting from the monotonous, sub-standard diet includes not only the graft and theft but also direct insubordination. Refusal to eat is a direct violation of regulations. Incidences are kept to a minimum by brief improvements in quantity and quality to limit the

dissent and prevent wide-spread revolts. The potential for violent upheaval due to the food situation is a grave concern for Soviet commanders. However, it must be remembered that the vast majority of the Soviet populace subsists on much the same diet with only minor complaints. The possibility of more serious discipline problems increases as awareness grows of better food availability in Warsaw Pact armies, and among their own elites. [Ref. 28]

### C. ETHNIC PROBLEMS

Suvorov and other emigres report that conflict between ethnic groups reduces unit discipline and cohesion. Among other things, it results in fighting, disrespect and assaults. The Soviet Union is in actuality an empire consisting of over one hundred nationalities. Each nationality possesses its own unique cultural heritage and often a distinct language. The predominant nationality is Russian, but the rapidly increasing ethnic groups of Central Asia present a challenge to Slavic superiority.

The tsarist legacy of intense Russification, continued under the communist regime, has caused considerable resentment among the minority peoples that leads to serious discipline problems. Though the armed forces are considered to be an instrument of integration, there are many who claim it is a tool for continued Russian domination [Ref. 29: p. 162].



Ample evidence of this domination is found in the preponderance of Russians in the officer ranks. Virtually the entire officer corps is of Slavic nationality. Further, there is the practice of not allowing conscripts to serve in their homeland to remove them from cultural and familial influences. Certain minorities are deemed capable of only serving in certain military fields. The more technical and prestigious branches, like the Navy and the Strategic Rocket Forces, are almost entirely staffed by Slavs. Labor intensive branches, like the infantry and the construction units, are assigned the Tatars, Kazakhs, and Yakuts solely by nationality. [Ref. 22: pp. 215-217]

Interview reports prepared by Bathurst and Burger indicate that there is a great deal of friction, and a consequent breakdown in discipline and unit cohesion, resulting from blatant Russian racism and a reactionary minority backlash. Viktor Belenko reported that in some areas, Russian officers cannot safely walk the streets after dark out of fear for their lives [Ref. 25: p. 70]. In some units, minority members are deliberately tormented and suffer physical abuses, sometimes resulting in death, due to their ethnic heritage [Ref. 30: p. 240].

Ethnic problems are a further hindrance to good order and discipline that arises from the inferior education provided most minorities. Discipline problems that arise

due to incomprehension and a lack of fluency in Russian results in accidental disobedience. A conscript who does not understand Russian may not deliberately set out to disobey an order, but becomes insubordinate when he fails to act properly. Inadvertent equipment destruction often results when a Central Asian soldier cannot operate or repair items in accordance with instructions printed in Russian that he cannot read [Ref. 29: pp. 181-182].

Quite obviously there is a growing potential for increased discipline problems in the near future for the Soviet armed forces. As more and more minority members are conscripted to man the Soviet armies, and as the minorities come to outnumber the Slavs, there is the possibility of the minorities extracting their revenge for centuries of racial oppression. Also, as the Central Asians become more aware of the disparities that exist between themselves and the Slavs in terms of benefits and living conditions, there may be a demand for a more equitable distribution of the fruits of the Soviet state. In any event, the current ethnic conflict manifests itself in discipline problems ranging from fights to absenteeism. The end result is a less effective fighting force through both personnel and equipment problems.

#### D. TRAINING METHODS

Physical and mental strains imposed by training methods is reported by many emigres to decrease discipline and lower

morale by its monotony and depersonalization. Discipline lapses manifests themselves as disrespect and disaffection. Training for combat is a necessary requirement for armed forces the world over. Training in the Soviet Union is a unique amalgamation of preparation and control. Extensive training is conducted not only to practice the arts of war, but by scheduling virtually every hour with some activity the Soviets severely limit the amount of free time available to the individual soldier. The limiting of free time is identified by Suvorov as a deliberate attempt to impose good order and discipline.

A peculiar aspect of the training cycle is due to the system of conscription. Conscripts are to serve for two years, with the exception of the navy where men must serve three. Call-ups occur twice annually, in spring and autumn, so that there is an effective turnover of one quarter of the force every six months. According to Suvorov, after an initial training period of physical conditioning titled the Young Soldiers Course, the average conscript will undergo the exact same training procedures four times before he is demobilized. [Ref. 22: pp. 230-231]

This training is not mentally tasking. It is dull, laborious, and repetitive. It frequently consists of doing the same manual task over and over again, such as loading artillery shells or turning a steam valve. Furthermore,

operations that in the West are accomplished by automatic monitoring systems are performed in the Soviet Union by humans. Men reportedly often sit and watch a multitude of gauges or listen to a hydrophone array uninterrupted for hours on end. Such work is boring and monotonous and is depersonalizing in its repetition. Discipline and morale consequently suffer. [Ref. 22: p. 235]

Several emigres relate that what little free time there is theoretically available to the soldier or sailor is frequently devoted to preparing for the next day. Menial tasks such as shining shoes and belt buckles are accomplished then in an attempt to maintain good order and discipline. Punishments for minor offenses apparently often involve extra duties, which can only be fulfilled at night at the expense of sleep. The result of the regimen, combined with the diet already discussed, produces tired and fatigued soliders. [Ref. 27: p. 8]

It might then be imagined that by so regimenting the daily life of the ordinary soldier and sailor there would be little opportunity for mischief and misconduct. However, the physical and mental strains imposed on the personnel are reportedly responsible for lower morale and the consequent lowering of motivation and discipline. Soldiers and sailors apparently learn quickly to conserve themselves and only do the minimum to fulfill their service obligations. An

example of such adaptation is a perversion of the concept of barracks discipline. It is in actual fact hazing, but it is a disruption and distortion of what discipline is supposed to be.

According to many former servicemen, the soldiers and sailors are generally divided into two groups: the "young ones" (Molodye) and the "old men" (Stariki) [Ref. 27: p. 4]. The former are the new conscripts and the latter are those in subsequent semesters of service. This caste system is present in berthing compartments and barracks where often several hundred men are billeted. The elder conscripts flaunt their superiority over the younger men, claiming special privileges and forcing undesirable duties onto the new men. There is a consequent breakdown in discipline as the new men realize that their officers will not interfere with the situation. [Ref. 22: p. 223]

Suvorov states that the majority of the heavy work and manual labor is performed by the new man. Everything from digging tank traps to cleaning latrines is fostered off on the new recruits. The Molodye shine the shoes, make the beds and clean the weapons of the Stariki, they are also sometimes forced to hand over their meat and sugar rations to their elders. The soldiers who are soon to be demobilized appropriate the Molodye's new uniforms, exchanging them for their worn out ones. [Ref. 22: pp. 222-223]



The system does not appear to meet with a great deal of resistance. Part of the reason lies in numbers, as the new recruits are physically outnumbered. Also, there is the awareness that every Molodye will eventually become a Stariki, and can then extract his privileges. It is apparent that officers and senior enlisted are aware of what is happening, but tolerate the hazing as a convenient element of control and discipline maintenance. Dissent in the ranks between Stariki and Molodye is apparently permitted to prevent a coalescing of dissent against the entire regime. Yet Suvorov contends that by countenancing and overlooking such abuses, they lose respect and undermine the status of discipline. Combined with the monotony of standard training, motivation, morale and discipline are all lessened.

#### E. LIVING CONDITIONS

Suvorov and Belenko both reveal that living conditions contribute to the discipline problem by providing an environment for theft and hazing to occur, thereby increasing the disrespect for senior personnel and the overall disaffection for the regime. Housing throughout the Soviet Union is notoriously poor and military accommodations are no exception. Communal apartments are common not only in the civilian sector, but are the domicile as well for most married officers. [Ref. 25: p. 79]

Belenko also states that the Soviet armed forces do not provide family housing for the vast majority of its personnel. Those soldiers and sailors with families are forced to compete in the local economy for living arrangements. This results in cramped living conditions, with shared kitchen and toilet facilities, poor plumbing, shoddy carpentry, and often inadequate protection from the elements. [Ref. 31: pp. 97-101]

Barracks for soldiers reportedly often accommodate up to five hundred individuals. Combined with drafty windows, paltry heating and little or no facilities for drying wet clothing, these barracks hardly produce a homey atmosphere. The latrines are likely to be outside and the hot water supply for washrooms is unreliable. Overcrowding is a way of life for most Soviet citizens, so the fact that many emigres recall their period of military service as particularly confining indicates just how bad these conditions are. [Ref. 23: pp. 34-35]

The navy may be considered even worse off. Soviet warships have not been constructed with habitability as a prime consideration. Many vessels do not have air conditioning or forced ventilation. Insufficient distilling plants do not produce adequate fresh water for personal hygiene. Such accommodations are not conducive to the maintenance of good order and discipline. Soviet sailors

must frequently practice "hot-racking" to share a bunk between two or even three sailors. Inadequate safeguards against nuclear radiation presents a severe health hazard to the sailors onboard nuclear powered and nuclear armed warships. [Ref. 32: pp. 57-58]

It is rather apparent that close crowding and few amenities lowers morale and contributes to disciplinary problems. Petty theft and hazing also contribute to the breakdown of discipline. Poor living conditions do not provide a respite from the de-humanizing aspects of Soviet military life. Discipline problems exist in part because the servicemen do not have a safe, warm haven to retire to.

#### F. OTHER FACTORS AND SUMMATION

Many other sources and causes of discipline violations exist in the Soviet armed forces. The items previously examined are noted for their frequency in a wide variety of reports. Together they may conveniently be labeled as quality of life items. Each factor is sufficient in itself to explain why discipline infractions occur. The combination of all factors not only manifests itself as discipline problems, but also lowers morale, motivation and unit cohesion. Together they generate a feeling that can best be expressed as disaffection.

Other factors require consideration due to the potential for increased discipline problems their existence portends.

Notable among these factors is the growing schism between officers and enlisted personnel. The schism promotes disrespect and disobedience, thereby lowering morale as well as discipline. The officer ranks are predominately Russian, nearly entirely Slavic, while the enlisted ranks see an increase in minority representation. Officers have the benefit of being able to shop in special stores and vacation in secluded resorts, prerequisites denied to enlisted. It is reportedly difficult for the average enlisted man even to get his leave days authorized. Officers are normally the recipients of better education and are more frequently able to take advantage of family and party affiliations. [Ref. 33: pp. 369-371]

Political education and indoctrination is reported by Suvorov as a source of dissatisfaction and disaffection among many enlisted conscripts. They are said to resent the large amount of time devoted to political training, frequently accomplished at the expense of their free time. The enlisted are also aware that much of what they are told about their system is blatantly false. [Ref. 22: p. 220]

Items that may be interpreted as effects of discipline problems can also be sources of disciplinary infractions themselves. Rumors of desertions, suicides, murders and absenteeism may provide the impetus for someone else to violate the rules. Drunkenness can also lead to more

serious violations including assault, theft, and vandalism, as well as desertion and absenteeism.

Of particular concern to the maintenance of discipline is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Contact with the Afghan populace has reportedly resulted in the increasing use of hashish by combat troops. Wimbush and Alexiev report that Soviet soldiers have been known to trade weapons and other equipment for hashish and for copies of the Koran. Incidences of atrocities committed by rebel forces against Soviet prisoners and battle dead has apparently prompted defections and insubordinations. As a whole, the Afghan invasion seems to have increased discipline problems and resulted in lower morale. This in turn starts a new cycle of disciplinary infractions as scared and demoralized troops commit further violations. [Ref. 34]

The factors and sources of discipline problems in the Soviet armed forces are to a large extent endemic to Soviet society. Despite the clear concern for discipline by the high command found in numerous press articles, very little can apparently be done to alleviate the situation without overhauling the entire system. That is something that cannot be done. It would require a distribution of power and a recognition of human rights and dignities that would be counter productive to the Soviet system.

The regime relies on punishment and the threat of punishment to maintain discipline, as previously discussed.



Dissent is apparently channeled away from the regime to enemies of the state and to barrack mates, be they Stariki or Molodye. This is not to imply that the Soviet armed forces are ripe for open revolt. There are apparently sufficient safeguards to prevent a military coup, such as the KGB. Rather, it is to point out that the Soviets have serious problems that do not appear in tables of organization and equipment or in military power estimates. Further, these disciplinary problems do not seem to have any validity as a quantified measure that can be useful in a mathematical expression.

#### IV. POLITICAL ASPECTS OF DISCIPLINE

The concept of discipline in the Soviet armed forces must be examined not only in its historical development but also in its political context. The philosophy of the Soviet Union, Marxism-Leninism, acts as a state religion and demands strict discipline. Therefore, Marxism-Leninism must be studied in any examination of the Soviet Union, let alone an examination of discipline in the Soviet armed forces.

The impact of Marxism-Leninism on the problem of military discipline is enhanced by a consideration of the dialectic. The dialectic purports to be a scientific reasoning process that is based upon objective reality and the resolution of opposites. Its appeal is in part due to the claim that dialectic processes exist and operate independently of human perception. Dialectical reasoning states that any notion, or thesis, automatically implies its own antithesis, or inherently contradictory aspects. The resolution of the thesis and the antithesis results in a synthesis, simultaneously a process and a result. The synthesis in effect becomes the new thesis, is itself negated by an antithesis, and the entire process continues.

The application of this thought process to the problem of military discipline allows the rationalization and legitimization of what by Western democratic standards may be called heinous acts, as scientifically necessary. Indeed, the purges of the 1930's may be justified as historically ordained, and explained as necessary to combat a class enemy. Thus those acts may be considered free from any moral repugnance, as is also the case when psychotherapy is used as a disciplinary technique.

Furthermore, since the dialectic is a scientific, evolutionary process, there is no real failure. Every action is therefore a progressive action. What might not be immediately apparent when examining dialectic thought is that it allows for the inclusion of a wide variety of solutions to any particular problem. There is in actuality an inordinate amount of freedom to apply radical concepts to solve particular problems. For instance, as when allowing the use of psychiatric therapy for discipline problems because the "patient" obviously does not think correctly. The freedom to try a technique remains true as long as the solution does not threaten the ruling regime.

More of Marxist-Leninist thought affects the concept of discipline than just dialectics. Concepts such as quantity evolving into quality, the idea of the class struggle, and the economic nature of the development of society are

important for a thorough understanding of the Soviet system. However, it is the profusion of dialectic rhetoric and the pronouncements of dialectics as an irrefutable scientific fact that permits the Soviet leadership to justify the combination of legalism and what the West might consider brutality in the maintenance of military discipline. Also, it is dialectic thought that allows the novel solutions to the Soviet military discipline problem, as shown below.

Operating under the definition of military discipline as "...the precise observance of order and rules that promotes efficient command of troops and helps in the surmounting of difficult combat situations," and further of military discipline as "...the most vital condition contributing to the high combat capability and constant combat readiness of the troops" [Ref. 1: p. 289], one would wonder what sort of human would fulfill that definition. The solution is found in the concept of the "new Soviet man." Such an individual would be unselfish, compassionate, enlightened, strong, brave, diligent, and altruistic. "He would be unflawed by any of the imperfections that had afflicted man in ages past" [Ref. 25: p. 56].

The desire for the new Soviet man is in fact a desire for predictability and orderliness. It is a desire for automatic obedience and discipline without the need for punishment methods. Using the logic of dialectic thought,

the Soviets believe that they can achieve the equivalent result of the new Soviet man by controlling the perception of objective reality. The deliberate manipulation of information, including falsification, thereby prevents certain perceptions. If the totality of information can be controlled, then the corresponding responses can also be controlled. As such, the new Soviet man would perceive his objective reality as the communist leadership wanted him to view it. His actions would then be predictable and orderly and there would be no discipline problems. [Ref. 35: pp. 180-183]

In conjunction with the effort to control information as a method to achieve a disciplined force, the Soviets have devoted considerable resources to studying thought processes. Recognizing that discipline problems remain even with near total information control, Shelyag and others identify the development of thought itself as the factor responsible for undisciplined acts. What Shelyag terms as "incorrect thought processes" are failures to maintain an "integrated, scientific communist world outlook" [Ref. 36: p. 144]. What Shelyag and the other writers actually mean is that the individual fails to think in the required dialectic manner and hence his behavior is incorrect.

This idea is clearly expressed when Druzhinin and Kontorov state that military discipline will be achieved



when trainees "unflaggingly follow the path of dialectic logic, and develop dialectical thought" [Ref. 35: p. 115]. This is a directive to teach soldiers to think in a particular manner. If individual thought processes can be mandated, then the individual's perception and analysis of reality will agree with the prescribed interpretation. When such agreement of thought is present there would then be no discipline problems. Therefore, Druzhinin and Kontorov state that it is extremely important for servicemen to learn communism, and to develop the ability to properly use dialectics to understand reality [Ref. 35: pp. 193-194].

Such polemics may appear to be exercises in semantics and of little importance to levels of military discipline. It is generally agreed that mental acumen is a basic necessity for any society to function. Methods of instruction must therefore be standard throughout the society, including the military, in order to invest the population with societal values and standards. Yet the Soviet Union is seeking to standardize the thought processes of the individual in the service of the state, and more importantly in the service of the party, in order to achieve a disciplined military force. With strict discipline a necessary requirement for orderliness, predictability and control of the armed forces, the Soviets are trying to mandate a particular style of thought itself to build a disciplined force.

Expressing the critical necessity for strict military discipline in modern times, Lomov further defines the conditions for its attainment:

The first and most important of these conditions is the scientific leadership of society by the Communist Party. This is achieved by its Marxist-Leninist conditioning, by its ideological commitment, by its solidarity and organization. Marxist-Leninist conviction among all members...is the demand underlying the foundation of unshakable discipline in the armed forces. The meeting of these requirements is the purpose of the 24th CPSU Congress concerning the improvement of scientific leadership...and a rise in the leading role of the party.

The second condition for further strengthening discipline in our Soviet Armed Forces is constant attention to the carrying out of this task in peacetime, as well as a correct combination of methods of conviction and methods of coercion in the indoctrination of the people. [Ref. 37: p. 202]

Such quotations as the above suggest that discipline problems in the Soviet armed forces are not going to be solved by improving living conditions or establishing constitutional guarantees for human rights. There is no impetus in the above statement to ameliorate the factors previously examined as causes of disciplinary infractions. Hence, it may be surmised that discipline will continue to be imposed with coercive methods of punishment and a tendency to disregard the individual as a person.

Lomov also expresses the crucial requirement of using scientific Marxism-Leninism to solve discipline problems in conjunction with Soviet troop control. Stating that a highly disciplined force is of primary necessity for troops

to be controlled effectively, Lomov urges the use of science and dialectics to provide answers to fundamental problems of discipline and control. In concert with dialectic thought, Druzhinin and Kontorov advocate the use of the science of control theory, cybernetics, to rationally solve these problems of discipline and control.

Cybernetics, as explained by Druzhinin and Kontorov, is a mathematical expression of a control process. It is a scientific examination of a controller, an object under control and a two-way link connecting them. Its primary significance as a science is dependent upon the information transmitted on the link. The information, when correctly analyzed, will allow the controller to direct the controlled object in the most effective manner. Furthermore, the controlled object will always operate in a guaranteed, predictable fashion. However, as Lomov points out, since cybernetics is a science, the information must be assessed in a mathematical relationship, or algorithm. The proper algorithm will correctly evaluate the data and provide the controller with the appropriate response for maximum efficiency. [Ref. 37: pp. 165-167]

Druzhinin, Kontorov, Lomov and others, lead one to believe that cybernetics is a viable concept for human as well as machine control [Ref. 35: pp. 180-181]. But cybernetics requires the quantification of all data for the

algorithm to work. Clearly in military affairs some of the most significant items are not quantifiable. Items such as morale, fear, hunger and discipline escape a precise numerical representation. Yet the Soviet insistence on quantification for the scientific solution of disciplinary problems manifests itself in numerical standards that actually exacerbate the discipline problem.

The scientific solution is a series of centrally imposed standards designed to elicit automatic responses and unflagging discipline. By so doing, the Soviets seem to believe they acquire not only the predictability and orderliness they desire, but also that they can combine the results in a troop control algorithm. The actual manifestation appears as a combination of coercive discipline and training standards.

The imposed scientifically determined requirement for discipline and control is the norm. The norm is an expected behavior standard. Failure to achieve the norm is therefore a violation of discipline. In the Soviet context, the norm is a statistically derived standard. But instead of being an average, or normal, value, the norm is the requirement.

With the Soviet demands for total control and strict discipline, there are norms for everything in military life from the time to perform items of personal hygiene to accuracy in weapons firing. For example, Suvorov relates

that tactical maneuvers are subdivided into separate, distinct parts. Each part has specific allotments of time, fuel and ammunition (supposedly scientifically determined) for the successful completion of that part [Ref. 22: pp. 252-254]. Each allotment is a norm to be achieved. Norms are not merely time standards, but include prescribed operating procedures and definite sequential acts for such items as how to put on a gas mask or how to do radar plotting [Ref. 38].

This norm supposedly provides a scientific standard for discipline. Each norm must be accomplished precisely and exactly. Goldhamer's research reveals that failure to achieve the norm can be punished by the imposition of extra duties or a sentence to a discipline unit. The imposition of scientifically derived norms is followed by an insistence on exactingness. It is exactingness that requires that each individual perform the norms in precise, minute detail [Ref. 30: p. 142]. Each individual will supposedly understand the requirement for attention to detail through dialectic reasoning. That is, according to Byely, each serviceman, properly trained to think in dialectical logic will of course completely agree with the necessity to fulfill the norm as a scientific absolute [Ref. 39: pp. 233-234].

Yet this Soviet attempt to solve disciplinary problems through science is what Suvorov and others identify as being



responsible for the monotonous and repetitious training examined earlier. It is this type of boring training that breeds disaffection and disrespect and lowers the discipline of soldiers and sailors. Furthermore, Lomov and others state that norms are to be established from observed and measured activities. Yet, if Goldhamer's research concerning the deliberate falsification of reports on everything from fuel consumption to equipment capabilities is correct, then the norms become arbitrarily imposed standards. Furthermore, Goldhamer states that norms become attained or surpassed by further falsification [Ref. 30: p. 150].

The falsification of results undermines the entire discipline and control apparatus, if the data are manufactured, then the decision, control and discipline solutions have no basis in reality. Consequently, the scientific solution for discipline demanded by the political philosophy is also faulty. Clearly the solution only increases the problem, and highlights the paradox of trying to quantify non-quantifiable elements.

In summary, the political philosophy of Marxism-Leninism demands a scientific solution for the Soviet military discipline problem. However, the factors that cause discipline problems can not be quantified to fit neatly into some prescribed control algorithm. Dialectic thought is

supposed to provide the method whereby diverse solutions, from the imposition of the norm to imprisonment, are combined to provide actual solutions for the Soviet military discipline problem. Yet what appears to in fact occur is a continuation of the historical preference for physical punishments as the method of imposing discipline on the armed forces. Hence, there is a return to the first paradox found in the examination of discipline in the Soviet armed forces.

## V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The examination of discipline in the Soviet armed forces reveals two paradoxes that would seem to impede the attainment of a disciplined, controlled force. First of all, the historical development of the concept of discipline appears to reveal a consistent pattern by Russian and Soviet leaders to rely on methods of physical punishment as the primary means of imposing discipline. The paradox arises when the methods of attaining discipline are compared with contemporaneous regulations, constitutional clauses and ostensibly humanitarian, socialist philosophies. The paradox becomes more pronounced when the habit, or custom, of using physical punishment to impose discipline is compared to the example of Alexander Suvorov. Suvorov established and maintained discipline through the use of non-punitive measures and achieved striking battlefield successes.

The second paradox appears to be the result of the Soviet insistence for a scientific solution to the discipline problem in the armed forces. Marxist-Leninist analysis of the nature of man and modern war, conducted through the logic of the dialectic, seems to provide an objective answer to the question of how to solve the

discipline problem. However, the solution proposed through the science of cybernetics requires the quantification of discipline to insert into a control algorithm. Yet this is in contrast to the seemingly universal recognition of discipline as a non-quantifiable morale factor of war. It appears from a review of current disciplinary problems in the Soviet armed forces that punishment is still the primary method of imposing discipline because the application of science has failed. It seems rather apparent that the "new Soviet man" does not yet exist.

The examination of military discipline seems to reveal potentially severe restrictions on Soviet combat capability that are not apparent in quantitative analysis. The emphasis on strict discipline and control, with requirements for exactingness and prescribed responses would seem to reduce the capability for individual creativity during combat operations. It brings into question the ability of such a force to conduct sustained offensive operations when the fog and friction of war preclude the infusion of necessary data for control algorithms. There is then the implication that the Soviets will not be able to effectively control their forces.

It would seem that the apparent lack of control and discipline would be of increasing significance if the Soviets intend to adopt a military strategy involving

conventional conflict in preference to a spasmodic nuclear war. This is because history has repeatedly demonstrated, as Clausewitz pointed out, that the morale factors are of supreme importance in war. Morale factors, such as discipline, can overcome quantitative deficiencies that are easily measured. Conversely, a deficiency in morale levels, like discipline, can reduce the military power that is revealed in quantitative assessments like orders of battle and tables of organization and equipment.

It would appear, then, that the conventional military power of the Soviet Union is less than that revealed through a tabulation of men and equipments. However, an exact determination is not possible since discipline is only one of several non-quantifiable morale factors in modern war.



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